

Frequently Asked Questions Regarding Influenza

Michigan Department of Community Health (MDCH): February 2, 2004

Q: Is influenza reportable in Michigan and how do I report cases?

For Private Providers:

Under Michigan's Communicable Disease Rules (section 5111 of Public Act No. 368), influenza is reportable to your Local Health Department. Only the **total number of cases** (aggregate numbers) need be reported each week. Reporting assists public health authorities with tracking of influenza activity levels throughout the state.

Local Health Department contact information can be found on the Michigan Association for Local Public Health (MALPH) website at <http://www.malph.org/page.cfm/18>.

Individual case information is needed when reporting pediatric influenza-related encephalopathy, death or unexplained pediatric deaths. For additional details, please see the weblink [Pediatric Influenza Reporting Notice](#) which describes the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) request for information on these cases.

For Local Health Departments:

Reports of influenza received from private providers along with laboratory reports of influenza can be combined with other sources of reported influenza-like illness (e.g., Michigan School Building Weekly Report of Communicable Disease) as part of an aggregate total for the reporting week. The weekly report should be submitted electronically to MDCH via the current LHDSurv System or MDSS when available.

Q: Who should be notified if there is a suspected outbreak of influenza in an institutional or facility setting?

Suspected or confirmed outbreaks of influenza - or any unusual clusters of respiratory illness - occurring within a facility such as a school, nursing home, camp or hospital should be reported promptly to the Local Health Department where the facility is located. The Michigan Department of Community Health (MDCH) can provide laboratory testing support at no charge to assist in confirming the etiology of the outbreak.

Respiratory Specimen Collection kits can be obtained by local health departments upon request by contacting MDCH by fax (517-335-9039) or e-mail (DietzR@michigan.gov).

Prompt reporting of outbreaks allows public health officials to identify potentially related events occurring at the same time, or possibly larger-scale situations occurring across multiple locations, that may not otherwise be evident to a sole provider.

Q: What are the infection control measures that should be taken in healthcare settings?

The following infection control measures should be taken:

- Advise healthcare personnel to observe [Droplet Precautions](#) (e.g., wearing a surgical mask or procedure mask for close contact) in addition to [Standard Precautions](#) when examining a patient with symptoms of a respiratory infection.
- [Patient education materials](#) should be posted to instruct patients and persons accompanying them to inform healthcare personnel of respiratory symptoms upon registration and to practice [Respiratory Hygiene/Cough Etiquette](#). All individuals should practice good respiratory hygiene/cough etiquette.
- Persons with respiratory symptoms should wear masks and when possible be separated from other persons.
- Visitors and healthcare workers who have respiratory symptoms/illness should refrain from entering into the healthcare setting.
- For institutional facilities such as nursing homes or other settings that house high-risk persons, the use of antiviral drugs for treatment and prophylaxis are recommended for control of influenza outbreaks (<http://www.cdc.gov/flu/professionals/antiviralguid.htm>). Other infection control measures include instituting [droplet precautions](#), establishing cohorts of patients with confirmed or suspected influenza, re-offering influenza vaccinations to unvaccinated staff and patients, restricting staff movement between wards or buildings, restricting new admissions, restricting ill staff from patient care, and restricting contact between ill visitors and patients. For more please visit: <http://www.cdc.gov/flu/professionals/infectioncontrol/index.htm> and <http://www.cdc.gov/flu/professionals/infectioncontrol/institutions.htm>

MDCH Laboratory-Related Questions

Q: Which unit should be used to collect influenza samples for analysis by MDCH?

If possible, use Unit 45, which can be requested from MDCH using this form:

http://www.michigan.gov/documents/dch-0568_7396_7.pdf.

If Unit 45 is not being used, be sure to complete and include a Microbiology/Virology Test Requisition when sending the specimen(s) to MDCH:

http://www.michigan.gov/documents/DCH-0583TEST_REQUEST_7587_7.pdf.

Q: How should specimens be stored once collected?

Freeze at -20°C only the coolant from unit upon receipt; the viral transport medium can remain at room temperature until needed.

Once collected, specimens for influenza or respiratory viral cultures should be kept refrigerated, shipped on frozen coolant, and should reach the MDCH Bureau of Laboratories within 48 hours.

If a delay in transport is expected beyond 48 hours, freeze the specimens at -70°C or -20°C in a non-frost-free freezer and ship on dry ice.

Q: What is the best time to collect routine viral respiratory specimens?

Collect within one to three days of the onset of illness for the best recovery of the virus.

Q: What specimens are best for diagnosis of influenza or other viral respiratory infections?

Throat swab, nasopharyngeal swab, or non-formalinized tissue from autopsy, in suitable viral transport media. Please check the expiration date on the transport medium.

Q: How should the nasopharyngeal or throat swab specimen be transferred to transport media?

Roll the collected swab in transport medium. Express the fluid from the swab against the side of the specimen vial and discard the swab. Transport medium that still contains a swab cannot be examined. Ship on frozen coolant to the following address:

Michigan Department of Community Health
Bureau of Laboratories
3350 North Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.
Building 44 Room 155
P.O. Box 30035
Lansing, Michigan 48909

Q: Who should I call if I need additional information about laboratory issues?

Contact MDCH's DASH (Data And Specimen Handling) unit at 517-335-8059.